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Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal

Letter dated 5 September 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to an appeal by the President of the Hellenic Republic, Constantinos Stephanopoulos, regarding the observance of the Olympic Truce on the occasion of the twenty-seventh Olympic Games due to take place in Sydney, Australia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22.

(Signed) Elias **Gounaris**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

00-64024 (E) 140900

Annex to the letter dated 5 September 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

As President of the Hellenic Republic, birthplace of the Olympic Games, but also as a concerned citizen of the world, I am launching an appeal to all concerned parties to exercise their legitimate powers in support of the observance of the Olympic Truce on the occasion of the XXVIIth Olympic Games due to be held in Sydney, Australia.

I appeal for the laying down of all weapons and for the ceasing of all war preparations among countries and peoples currently in armed conflict or on the verge of conflict, for, at least, the duration of the Games, and one would hope even following their closing. This is, by its nature, an appeal solely based on humanity, transcending the inevitable questions of "right" and "wrong", of history or current realities, between parties to any conflict.

As you know, the Games will be held from 15 September to 1 October 2000. In this regard, I would like to bring to your attention the fact that, in 1999, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution, with 180 Member States, including Greece, as sponsors — a record number, in which it urged Member States to abide by the Olympic Truce, individually and collectively, and to pursue, in conformity with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of all international conflicts through diplomatic means.

My appeal is grounded on a history of concrete results, not romantic notions. Since antiquity, the concepts of the Olympic Games and of the ceasing of all hostilities for their duration have been inextricably linked. Throughout the duration of the Olympic Truce, from the seventh day prior to the opening of the Games to the seventh day following their closing, all conflicts ceased, allowing athletes, artists and spectators to travel to Olympia, participate in the Games and return to their homelands in safety.

Furthermore, the Olympic Truce symbolized the unique value of sport as a conduit for peaceful competition and coexistence among people, even among those who felt that differences between them were so great as to compel them to fight. All those combatants laid down their weapons during the Olympic Games, and sometimes even after the Games' closing.

In our "global village" the link between the biggest sport and cultural event, the Olympics, and a culture of peace will become a strong inspiration for the younger generations of our world. This concept continues to inspire my country today. This is the reason we are hosting the Olympic Truce Center which is chaired by the President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, who has consistently promoted this noble idea as President of the Committee.

Since truce could be observed and respected by all during those ancient times, my hope is that it can be observed and respected in our time as well, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, if we can only show the required strength and foresight.

By this message I appeal to you to become a guiding force in the modern Olympic Truce movement. Through officially announcing the observance of the Olympic Truce in your regions this year, you will be sending the world a powerful message of moderation and humanity with far-reaching repercussions. Your brave

example of voluntarily choosing to abide by the tradition of the Olympic Truce and Olympic ideals during the Sydney Olympics would spread around the world and give hope to millions of people, including children in conflict-torn regions. For my part, I assure you that my country and I will do all we can to disseminate your message of hope the world over.

Constantinos **Stephanopoulos**